

Word Worth®

WORD WORTH

WORLD MAGAZINE OF
IDEAS AND THE ARTS

June 2010

Volume X Number 6

COVER

GREETINGS

EDITORIALS

LETTERS

COLUMNS

ARTS

LINKS

ARCHIVES

NEXT

Issue coming
out on the 1st

Word Worth® is now accepting unsolicited contributions.

[Word Worth's
Site of the Month](#)

In This Issue:

[Alastair Reid](#) [Classic Readings](#)

When Is A Genital "Nick" OK?

When I heard the recent May announcement by the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP), to take a neutral stand on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and allow doctors to do a genital "nick" on little girls, I remembered the girl I will call "Lily."

She was a Hmong-American girl and one of my best friends when I was in college.

Lily came across as a cheerful and carefree person, but it was only when I got to know her closely

by Rita Banerji *in* [Editorials](#)

How I Broke My Arm and...

Memorial Day weekend was dreary. Not only were there persistent showers, but all the drains had stopped up. This was the second year we'd had this in May, so it looked as if we'd have to do away with our lovely old cottonwood tree.

We kept thinking the rain might stop for a set or two of tennis, but the puddles on the court were discouraging. By Monday evening, we felt so housebound that we went to play with broom and squeegee as well as rackets. We had played only ten minutes when the sprinkles began again.

by Barbara DuBois *in* [Columns](#)

Defense Against the Thunder

The mother and the little boy were waiting at the counter for their pizza-to-go, when the big man came in.

"You have an order to go for Richard," the big man said to the cashier.

"Yes, it's ready," she said. "It'll be right out."

The little boy had heard. He walked over to the big man and looked straight up.

"Your name is Richard," he said.

The big man looked astonished. "You're right, my name is Richard. Now, how did you know that?"

by Arthur Swartz *in* [Arts](#)

Send me a reminder when the next issue is posted:

Your: Name

E-mail

Addresses will be used for notification only.

Word Worth Volume IX issues are available in Archives

January 2010 v X #1

Editorials: *Burden of Knowledge*—Graceann Macleod
Columns: *Nomenclature*—Helen Peppe
Arts: *The Style-Rite ...*—Philip K. Edwards

March 2010 v X #3

Editorials: *Civility: Endangered*—Graceann Macleod
Columns: *Survivors of La Revolucion*—Art Schwartz
Arts: *Photography*—Armin W. Helz

May 2010 v X #5

Editorials: *Once Upon a Time With...*—Aurelia Carter
Columns: *Grandma*—Barbara DuBois
Arts: *Biography of a Thief II*—Philip K. Edwards

February 2010 v X #2

Editorials: *Love Child?—Not Hardly*—Anna Seymour
Columns: *The Rocks*—Elizabeth Morana
Arts: *Poetry*—Jennifer Campbell

April 2010 v X #4

Editorials: *Spring*—Marien Helz
Columns: *Presumed Innocent*—Elaine Greensmith Jordan
Arts: *Biography of a Thief I*—Philip K. Edwards

June 2010 v X #6

Editorials: *When Is A Genital “Nick” OK?*—Rita Banerji
Columns: *How I Broke My Arm and...*—Barbara DuBois
Arts: *Defense Against the Thunder*—Arthur Swartz

Word Worth Volume IX issues are available in 2009

January 2009 v IX #1

Editorials: *Review of Sex and Power*—M H Perry
Columns: *Bad*—Malka Davis
Arts: *The Art of Woodcraft*—Howard Miller

February 2009 v IX #2

Editorials: *Eradicating the Subtle Racism*—Anna Seymour
Columns: *The Stars We Danced With*—Christian Belz
Arts: *Photography*—Portraits from the 1800s

Check OUT:



[Punkins' Patch Antiques Shop](#)

[Michael J. DiLullo, MS,
CFP™
Certified Financial
Planner Practitioner](#)

[Big Tree Furniture Works](#)

[THRILLER TALES](#)

[Red Hot Pepper Jump-Rope
Winders](#)



[Get Domain Names](#)

[Aurora Artisans Websites](#)

[Advertise in Word Worth](#)

March 2009 v IX #3

Editorials: *The Line*—Christopher Wittman
Columns: *To Possess is to be Possessed*—Linda Cross
Arts: *Woodcraft*—Howard Miller

May 2009 v IX #5

Editorials: *Let Susan Boyle Alone*—Marien Helz
Columns: *The Photographer*—Barbara DuBois
Arts: *Biography of a Thief—Part II*—Howard Miller

July 2009 v XI #7

Editorials: *Sleep Again*—Marien Helz
Columns: *Mentors*—Linda Cross
Arts: *Woodcraft*—Howard Miller

September 2009 v IX #9

Editorials: *Farming*—Marien Helz
Columns: *Escape to Manzanita Dawn*—Ross M. Hall
Arts: *Photography*—Farming in the 1910s

November 2009 v IX #11

Editorials: *Letting Go*—Gary Earl Ross
Columns: *Literary Treasures*—Graceann Macleod
Arts: *A Family Matter*—Philip K. Edwards

April 2009 v IX #4

Editorials: *Getting Serious about Curriculum*—Marien Helz
Columns: *Cavalry*—Bruce Berger
Arts: *Sculpture*—Word Worth

June 2009 v IX #6

Editorials: *Asleep in the Cockpit*—Marien Helz
Columns: *Take Me to English Pubs*—James Francis Cahillane
Arts: *Photography*—Nick and Britta Monaco

August 2009 v XI #8

Editorials: *Baseball*—Marien Helz
Columns: *Bad Things Good?*—Cathy Crenshaw Doheny
Arts: *Juan Carvajal*—Translated by Alastair Reid

October 2009 v IX #10

Editorials: *Moving*—Anna Seymour
Columns: *Pet Peeves in Publishing*—Graceann Macleod
Arts: *Photography*—Bonnie Fields

December 2009 v IX #12

Editorials: *The Season To Be...*—Anna Seymour
Columns: *Weddings vs. Marriages*—Graceann Macleod
Arts: *Storm*—Linda Ettinger



MARYLAND 2007B
#10 BOX #20772
GUTHRIE, MARYLAND
20893-5772

KentLakes

Word Worth is not associated in any way with advertisers herein, nor does it endorse, nor ensure the correctness of advertisements contained herein, nor is Word Worth responsible for any claims made by the advertisers herein.

The early Indices are available in [Back Issues](#), *Volume I* archives are available in [2001](#), *Volume II* in [2002](#), *Volume III* in [2003](#), *Volume IV* in [2004](#), Volume V in [2005](#), Volume VI in [2006](#), Volume VII in [2007](#), and Volume VIII in [2008](#).



Word Worth[®] is published by Aurora Artisans[®], LLC

[Disclaimers](#)

[Contributors](#)

©2010 Word Worth[®]—World magazine of Ideas & the Arts[™]



Word Worth®

EDITORIALS

WORLD MAGAZINE OF
IDEAS AND THE ARTS

June 2010

Volume X Number 6

COVER

GREETINGS

EDITORIALS

LETTERS

COLUMNS

ARTS

LINKS

ARCHIVES

When Is A Genital “Nick” OK?

by Rita Banerji

When I heard the recent May announcement by the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP), to take a neutral stand on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and allow doctors to do a genital “nick” on little girls, I remembered the girl I will call “Lily. “

She was a Hmong-American girl and one of my best friends when I was in college.

Lily came across as a cheerful and carefree person, but it was only when I got to know her closely that I found out that she had a deep and painful secret. When she was about thirteen years old, and living in the mid-west, a Hmong American man kidnapped her and held her hostage in his house, where he also raped her. In the eyes of the Hmong American community Lily was now “married” to this man.

Through the 90s I had visited Lily’s family a few times, both in California and the Minneapolis, Minnesota area, where there are large Hmong-American communities. And often I would hear stories of “kidnap” marriages which have long been traditional among the Hmong. Teenage girls would suddenly stop coming to school, and then in few months they would be pregnant. The teachers knew what was going on, and so did local law enforcement. But there was hardly any intervention. Nobody wanted to rock the boat by setting off cultural friction with an immigrant community.

But in Lily’s case things turned out differently. The American couple for whom Lily’s mother cleaned house encouraged her to file a case of kidnap and rape. Lily’s mother had grown up in a remote mountainous community in Laos and had never been to school. She had just started to learn her alphabets. But she decided that even if her own community gave her no other option, the new country that she was now a citizen of -- did. She not only filed charges, she also sat through the court hearings every day, and testified. The Hmong American community excommunicated her, and

her husband left her.

But Lily had the option of living out her childhood, going to college and later to medical school. As a doctor when she began to help the Hmong American community, the family was welcomed back into the fold.

The AAP said allowing genital mutilation would “build trust” with the immigrant communities. They even tried to equate FGM with male circumcision, which it is not. Often the clitoris and large parts of the labia major and minor are excised and the vaginal walls stitched so they are almost shut. It is more like castration – cutting off a part of the penis or testes, and this too often without anesthesia or sterile equipments. Many little girls die of bleeding or of secondary infection. Women with FGM have a much higher chance of dying during labor, or having their babies die.

Most traditional customs have evolved in effect to reinforce conventional hierarchies – including gender hierarchies. Customs like FGM, dowry, kidnap “marriages,” and “honor killings” are customs meant to keep girls and women in subordinate positions in society through the means of force and violence. These customs allow girls and women no choice and no control over their own lives. When U.S. policies refuse to address these customs and draw a firm line, they essentially perpetuate the inherent violence on girls and women in these cultures.

Lily would probably have had no choice but to live with her kidnapper and rapist were she living in Laos. But in the U.S. she had the option of refusing to accept the sadistic fate her culture would compel her to abide by. The question that the U.S. and other official bodies must ask when designing policies concerning certain customs of immigrant communities is: what is more important – keeping peace with the community or ensuring the protection of individual and human rights? The stand that U.S. policies take on traditional customs like FGM, will have a wider implication on the lives of women not only in the U.S., but also in the countries where these customs originate, for it will serve as a sounding board on the emerging global perspective on women's rights, and make a strong statement on what is not universally acceptable any more

[\[Cover\]](#) [\[Greetings\]](#) [\[Editorials\]](#) [\[Letters\]](#) [\[Columns\]](#) [\[Arts\]](#) [\[Links\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)



Word Worth[®] is published by Aurora Artisans[®], LLC
[Disclaimers](#) [Contributors](#)
©2010 Word Worth[®]—World magazine of Ideas & the Arts[™]



Word Worth®

COLUMNS

WORLD MAGAZINE OF
IDEAS AND THE ARTS

June 2010

Volume X Number 6

COVER

GREETINGS

EDITORIALS

LETTERS

COLUMNS

ARTS

LINKS

ARCHIVES

How I Broke My Arm and Learned to Love the Cast

by Barbara DuBois

Memorial Day weekend was dreary. Not only were there persistent showers, but all the drains had stopped up. This was the second year we'd had this in May, so it looked as if we'd have to do away with our lovely old cottonwood tree.

We kept thinking the rain might stop for a set or two of tennis, but the puddles on the court were discouraging. By Monday evening, we felt so housebound that we went to play with broom and squeegee as well as rackets. We had played only ten minutes when the sprinkles began again.

Even before the court was slippery, I fell over backward reaching for a high one on my backhand. Ignorantly, I broke the fall with my left hand and instantly regretted it. I couldn't even toss the ball to serve.

At home, we decided the pain needed my usual ice-water cure. The children were delighted to fill the bucket, getting even for all the sprained ankles I'd frozen for them, but I loved the chill, which really numbed the pain.

After I suffered through the night, I called the clinic, but no doctor was back yet from the holiday. The doctor on call arrived after an hour to read an x-ray and confirm the break, in the big bone, right at the end by the wrist. The pain was from ligaments and tendons, not from the broken bone. The break was so small that all it needed was protection, but he wrapped me in a medieval plaster cast to the armpit. I had brought Future Shock with me to pass the time, but I had to live in the past.

Mike took me home, where he and Billy and Patsy volunteered to get dinner. I remembered a pizza in the freezer, and Mike got that out, while Patsy set the table and Billy emptied the dryer and folded laundry. The millennium! But I'd have preferred to have them loafing rather than to have that stiff arm.

I tried not to cry myself to sleep. Husband Will said the tears would keep the cast from hardening, but I broke

down. With the pain gone, I didn't feel sorry for myself so much, but I was miserable about the family's summer. They wouldn't go boating without me and most likely would mope at home rather than take me along when I couldn't go in the water.

Son Mike, home between semesters, had been my sweet chauffeur till I was safe in the cast. It cheered me to think that I could spend the summer improving relationships with my children. Billy, the middle child, was always companionable, and Mike would mostly be at college, but Patsy at twelve was getting more rebellious every day. Perhaps my helplessness would tie her to me. She was already fascinated by the idea of doing my hair for me. Maybe it wasn't too late for us to become buddies.

When it was time to start dinner, she called from Josie's to ask to have Josie come to dinner. I was almost speechless at her thoughtlessness, but then I remembered my hopes and said yes if Patsy helped me. But they didn't show up till we had finished eating. Practicing my new image, I didn't scold.

The next day wasn't any better for her and me. She had bought a pattern and fabric for a swimsuit, so I did some ironing so as to be near the sewing machine to consult. But she lost patience and quit as usual. I managed to keep quiet; usually when I offered to help, she ended up mad at me as well as at the pattern company, the thread company, the fabric company, and Singer.

She left for Lassie League practice and then for a swim with Josie in a borrowed suit. Again came a call to bring Josie to dinner, but my image slipped, and I said no, though I agreed to her overnight visit. When Patsy arrived for dinner, she had Josie with her. Josie said she had eaten, but she joined us anyway, so I had Patsy wash the dishes that didn't fit in the machine.

Next day I thought it was time to try driving. It was awkward but possible. I carefully came to complete stops at stop signs and signaled all lane changes, for fear of getting a ticket for driving illegally with one arm. I thought of phoning to ask the police about legality, but I decided to avoid attracting their attention. "Calling all cars: be on the lookout for wild one-armed woman driver!" Anyway they would have answered conservatively; I called once to ask whether you really have to signal a left turn where the sign and the street arrow both say "Left turn only," and they answered that you must always signal a turn.

At dinner, I told the family about the nurse who wondered whether I spelled my name, "Barbara," without the middle "a" like the famous singer. "Why don't you?" teased Will. "Oh," I said, "she's the only one who does, and I'm afraid everyone would be reminded of her and then look at my nose and think it's bigger than it is already." "Boy," Will said, "if you had a nose like that, there'd be no holding you." "Except by the nose," hooted Patsy, beside herself that she'd beaten Billy to a punch line. Will hadn't heard her, but the rest of us were laughing too hard to explain it to him right away. What a treat to have tears of joy instead of despair.

The next challenge was bread, which I had regularly made for my appreciative family. If I could hold the bowl between the cast and my body, I could stir the dough. But after it had risen, I couldn't see how to get it from the bowl to the board. Mike came to help and figured out that I could loosen the dough from the bowl and then bang the upside-down bowl on the board till the dough fell out. Billy said, "My mother can make bread

with one hand tied in front of her!"

Next day was our wedding anniversary, and the day, three weeks after my fall, when I could have another x-ray and change to a shorter cast. But the doctor was out of town, and I had to sport my big old cast with a dressy dress. I couldn't bear to wear my white anniversary dress with that off-white, not to say dirty, cast, so I wore yellow, beautiful with Will's gardenias. Funny about the cast: no autographs. I didn't actually discourage the children; but I didn't invite them to write on it either. I had a feeling I'd get less tired of looking at it if it weren't too conspicuous. But I did feel partly stuffy and partly ignored, to have it look so plain compared with most casts.

When we got home from dinner (no dancing), we found Patsy with a bandaged foot. Lassie League practice had been canceled, so they had strolled home past the park pond, where she got herself pushed in and cut her foot on a broken bottle. I felt guilty about not having left word about where we'd be but I'd assumed she'd be occupied with baseball. We were a picture two days later when I took her in for a checkup, Patsy on borrowed crutches and Mother in a cast. Some wag asked whether we were practicing for the Fourth of July parade.

Now the poor baby had to stay home with me, but couldn't help much from her prescribed sitting position. We did spend some pleasant hours making Christmas cards. I held the paper steady with the cast while I drew a reindeer, and she colored the deer with a turquoise marker.

Various friends suggested that I buy a steering-wheel spinner to make driving easier, a dustpan that wouldn't slip, and a jar opener that fastens under a cabinet and doesn't require two good arms. By the day my doctor had time for me, I'd be thoroughly acclimated to the inconvenience of the cast. At that point, Billy thought up my line, "How I broke my arm and learned to love the cast."

But I had worried unnecessarily about the family: they'd go camping as long as I didn't mind. While we were planning a trip, Josie's father called to invite Patsy to the mountains for a week or ten days because he had bought a small hotel and was taking his family there for a while. We thought the separation might do us all good, so we agreed. Then we invited Billy's friend, Paul, to go camping, as long as we had extra room in the camper.

We went to our favorite water, Navajo Lake, had beautiful weather and excellent fishing. Will took the boys out after dark, and they had caught ten breakfast trout by one in the morning. In daylight we wondered whether I could drive the boat and pull skiers. I could start the engine, but when I tried to pull the boys out on skis, I couldn't hold the wheel steady while pulling the throttle forward fast. The wind was turning the boat and tangling the ropes and exasperating Will. I was relieved when they came back in the boat.

Josie's father brought Patsy home soon after we got home, since the girls weren't at the hotel when we stopped on our way home to pick her up. She was so happy that my hopes rose again, though it was probably leftover happiness, not happiness from being home.

At home, Will thought of a new recreation for me. We lived near the golf course, and I couldn't swing a club

now, but I could hunt lost golf balls with him. Since he did it all the time when he played alone, he knew all the likely spots. I usually found one or two while he found five or six, in the hour or so before dark. Months later he confessed that he'd planted balls for me to find to cheer me up, and I hadn't even found them all. He'd say, "Oh, look at the rabbit" and drop a ball for me to find after I'd stopped looking for the rabbit. Now, that's devotion.

At last the debut. What a funny looking, skinny, pale arm, with a nick where the doctor's saw had slipped. He said to soak it and move it in warm water. Since there was time to swim before dinner, I complied: the pool was warm, and I moved the arm gently, avoiding the crawl stroke. Then at bedtime I luxuriated in a shower without a plastic bag.

We planned one more trip to get me on skis once that summer. I was afraid to use that arm, so I held onto my right arm with my left hand and held the rope handle at the middle with my right hand. I almost gave up after a few failures, but desire and determination pulled me out of the water. It was easy once I knew I could. Will was impressed: later I heard him bragging about me to relatives that I purposely hadn't told about the accident, ashamed as I was to have broken a bone in the first place.

There I was, all back to normal in eight weeks and wondering what I'd gained or lost. My plan for my daughter was a failure. She could never fix my hair because she wouldn't stay home. But I did get closer to Will: one day when he was helping me struggle into a blouse, my upraised arms, cast and all, were in a perfect position for a hug, so we added a new item to our morning routine. Ever after, we had a hug every morning between tooth brushing and dressing, though I didn't need help anymore.

[\[Cover\]](#) [\[Greetings\]](#) [\[Editorials\]](#) [\[Letters\]](#) [\[Columns\]](#) [\[Arts\]](#) [\[Links\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)

Word Worth[®] is published by Aurora Artisans[®], LLC

[Disclaimers](#)

[Contributors](#)

©2010 Word Worth[®]—World magazine of Ideas & the Arts[™]



Word Worth®

ARTS

WORLD MAGAZINE OF
IDEAS AND THE ARTS

June 2010

Volume X Number 6

COVER

GREETINGS

EDITORIALS

LETTERS

COLUMNS

ARTS

LINKS

ARCHIVES

REID

READINGS

W W ARTS 2

Defense Against the Thunder

by Arthur Swartz

The mother and the little boy were waiting at the counter for their pizza-to-go, when the big man came in.



“You have an order to go for Richard,” the big man said to the cashier.

“Yes, it’s ready,” she said. “It’ll be right out.”

The little boy had heard. He walked over to the big man and looked straight up. “Your name is Richard,” he said.

The big man looked astonished. “You’re right, my name is Richard. Now, how did you know that?”

The little boy giggled. “My name is Billy,” he said.

The big man squatted down. “That’s a great name. You’re lucky to have a mom smart enough to give you that name,” he said. “I’m very glad to meet you, Billy.” He shook the little boy’s small hand and smiled at the mother, who smiled back.

The little boy looked at his mother, and then turned to the big man again. “I’m scared of thunder,” he said.

The big man straightened up, and looked from side to side, as if he didn't want anyone to hear. "I've never told anyone, but when I hear thunder, I hide," he said. "Do you hide too?"

The little boy giggled happily again, and nodded.

"You get right into bed with me, don't you?" his mother said, smiling at the boy. "And we protect each other, and then we aren't afraid anymore. Isn't that right?"

But the little boy wasn't listening. He was still staring at the big man.

The cashier, who had disappeared into the kitchen, returned with two big bags of food, and the big man reached into his pocket, took out a bunch of bills, and paid.

"Make sure they put in some extra Parmesan, and the bread too, Richie," the little boy's mother said, playfully. "Sometimes they forget."

"I put them in myself," the cashier said, handing the big man his change.

"We don't want the wife and kids to be disappointed, do we?" the woman said, playing.

"No," the big man said. "They can be a really nasty bunch when they're disappointed. Especially when they're hungry."

The woman did not smile at this, and said nothing.

The little boy stepped closer to the big man. "Are you a man?" he asked.

His mother shook her head, and rolled her eyes.

The big man was surprised. "Well, yes, I am a man", he said, after a moment's hesitation. "That's what everyone tells me, and I think they're right. In fact I'm sure of it."

The woman laughed as he paid, and picked up the bags.

"Well, bye now." he said. "Enjoy your pizza."

"Thank you," the woman answered. "And you also, and the family."

Art Schwartz's professional background includes several seasons of minor league baseball, and years of stand-up comedy in night clubs and resorts all over the country. Five of his plays have been produced in New York. His poetry has appeared in two dozen publications and won several prizes. He is originally from Brooklyn, and now lives in Rockville Centre, Long Island.

As he turned to leave, he ran his hand through the little boy's hair. "Cute little guy," he said to the woman.

"Thank you," she said softly.

He walked out the door and across the parking lot to his car. The sky had darkened, and it was beginning to rain lightly, and after had gone a few blocks, he swung into the right lane, and at the next corner made a right turn. He was speeding along the side streets, back to the restaurant. He screeched into the parking lot, jumped out of the car and ran toward the entrance, but before he got there he saw the boy and his mother about to get into their car at the far end of the lot. He walked quickly toward them at first, but when they saw him from a distance, he slowed down, trying to appear casual. The woman was opening the door for the boy, who was carrying their sodas, one in each hand.

The boy scrambled into the car, and the big man held the door open.

"I want to tell you something, Billy," he said. "You're little right now, but you're getting bigger every day, and soon you'll be all grown up and you'll be a man. That's for sure."

He was trying not to talk too fast or too loud. "You'll be a man, like me, but there's going to be one difference between us. When you grow up, you won't be afraid of thunder." He wanted to say more, but couldn't think of anything else to say. "No, you won't be afraid of thunder when you're all grown up. You'll laugh at thunder," he said again, and closed the door.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have kept you," he said. "Better be on your way. It looks like it's going to come down hard any minute."

"Yes," she said. But for a few seconds they both stood in the rain, saying nothing. Then she got into her car, and he watched as they left.

He walked to his car, which was parked in two spaces with the lights on and the motor running, and as he settled into his seat he glanced at the clock, and thought of the his wife. He had taken much longer than usual, and she might be worrying by now. Then, smelling the food, he realized that he had lost his appetite.

Pulling out of the restaurant parking lot onto the highway, he was thinking about the boy and his mother, and after a few minutes he wanted to stop, but couldn't. He turned into his driveway still thinking about them, and getting out of the car with the two bags of food, he looked up at the sky. It was raining harder, and when he got to the door there was a flash of lightning. He paused, waiting for

the thunder, and when it came he winced. He had been hoping there would be no thunder. Then he heard his

children inside laughing, paying no attention to it, and now he hoped, as he opened the door, that the little boy and his mother were home by now, under the covers, protecting each other. There was no one else. They were their only defense against the thunder, he thought, as he walked into the house.

[\[Cover\]](#) [\[Greetings\]](#) [\[Editorials\]](#) [\[Letters\]](#) [\[Columns\]](#) [\[Arts\]](#) [\[Links\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)

Word Worth[®] is published by Aurora Artisans[®], LLC

[Disclaimers](#)

[Contributors](#)

©2010 Word Worth[®]—World magazine of Ideas & the Arts[™]

